

## NATIONAL PROSPERITY

Excuse me, Please vacate your house.  
We need it for national prosperity.  
No, no, we are not joking. You don't know what to do with your house.  
You really must be a fool to want to live in it  
Or to grow flowers in the backyard.  
We need it for National Prosperity.  
What is National Prosperity you ask? Come on,  
'National' means all of us; We will all be prosperous, you see.  
Of course, you will also get a part in it;  
We will pull down your house and set up a factory there.  
Surely, we will give you a reasonable price for it, er... say, Rs.3000?  
And then, do you want a job? Oh you are too old?  
Then how about your son? He is too young? May be your brother?  
What do you mean, what kind of a job? Why, the very best he could ask for  
While we are pulling down your house, he can be a watchman.  
He can even wash cars or grow flowers in one of your houses.  
It will be a much better garden; you are still not convinced?  
Now get the hell out of here. I cannot spend the whole day with you.  
We have to build the nation.

If national prosperity sounds like a joke to you, that is because, it has not happened on you. Yet this is what has happened to people in scores of villages in the region. Sileru, Jolaput, Tandava, Raiwada, Visakhapatnam Steel Plant the all too familiar projects where people have been unsettled and driven out of their homes and livelihoods. It is an even greater tragedy that today, there is no study or even basic information existing on the extent of destruction, displacement or rehabilitation that has taken place even in one of these projects. However, the country's figures reveal an agonizing picture of victimization wherein, two hundred and fifteen lakh people in the last four decades have been displaced due to various 'development' projects like dams, mining, industries, etc. Further, seventy percent of these people displaced have not received any rehabilitation and family after family of these two fifteen lakhs have morbid tales to tell us, of their mental and physical, social and economic traumas, living with the hope of this much promised development and they would never receive.

The disaster is striking again – this time in the heart of the A.P. tribal land. The difference, however, is that instead of the government, it is a private company which has put on the mantle of the 'welfare state' in order to 'develop' people by displacing them. Ironically, this time the tribals share their plight with another poor community, the fisherman. This is so because, the mining activity at Volasi is linked with the Sea Water Magnesite factory at the mouth of the river Gostani, where fisherman would be displaced.

## THE PUBLIC WELFARE PROJECT OF BIRLA PERICLASE

A 250 crore project of Birla Periclase, a company of Indian Rayon and Industries, for purification of Sea Water Magnesia at Chippada village, Bhimili, 20 kms upstream of Vizag on the sea coast.

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Extraction of Calcite mineral at Nimmalapadu Village, Volasi Panchayat, Anantagiri Mandal of Vizag District scheduled agency.

The definition of Public Welfare in the National prosperity agenda:

### **VOLASI**

1. Fourteen tribal villages will be severely affected in Volasi Panchayat, due to extraction of 1000 tons of Calcite per day;
2. Land acquisition of 210 acres of tribal, forest and revenue lands. Thereby destroying the lives and livelihoods of tribals.
3. Construction of a road, 20 kms long and 90 ft wide in the interior most and thickly forested belt of Volasi Panchayat at a cost of 13 crores, half of which will be borne by the Government;
4. Deforestation through felling of hundreds of years old trees of major timber and forest produce (more than 1,000 trees of Jack, tamarind, mango, etc.,) the value of which would be immeasurable in terms of either economic or ecological benefits;
5. Immense disturbance to the other flora and fauna due to deforestation, blasting operations, etc., in a region already fragile.
6. The socio-ecological disturbance due to heavy traffic through plying of 150 trucks per day and resulting illegal trades and vices in a tribal society which is simple and innocent;
7. The destruction of the river systems, like that of R. Sarada leading to erosion of the soil and heavy siltation of Raiwada Reservoir which supplies water to Steel plant and Vizag city;
8. Agriculture for 46 pattadars in 500 acres would be made impossible immediately and it would seriously affect 150 more families soon after;
9. The hitherto self sufficient tribals practicing organic farming in their rich agricultural lands would be economically shattered and the employment generated, if at all, would not be equivalent to their present economic status.

### **CHIPPADA**

1. Displacement of fishermen of Chippada village and loss of livelihood to 13000 families doing fishing in the area;
2. Land acquisition of 237 acres belonging to fishermen and others, thereby destroying their livelihood on both agriculture and fishing;
3. Construction of Sea water Magnesia factory at a cost of 250 crores;

4. Extraction of two million gallons of fresh water per day (equivalent to water supply for one lakh people per day) from River Gostani by digging up 404 bore-wells in the riverbed near the sea coast at Tatituru and Tagarapuvalsa zones;
5. The ground-water table in the region will be severely depleted as a result of this exploitation of fresh water for the factory thereby causing rise in the salinity of the groundwater;
6. Agriculture is most likely to be affected by alterations in soil and water chemical compositions;
7. Mode of withdrawal of the sea water at 87,000 cu. Mm/day using either submersible pumps or sump and pump house is in violation of the guidelines issued by Ministry of Environment and Forests Notification dated 15.12.90;
8. the adverse affects on marine life:
  - a. The marine organisms will not sustain the onslaught of effluents in to the sea even if treated and will destroy
  - b. The intake and discharge of water from the sea through suction pumps would endanger the naturally inhabiting species of fish and prawn in the area;
  - c. The endangering of the marine species would lead to their migration the effect of which would be felt in the fishing villages in the entire area;
  - d. The waste accumulations cause serious air, land, water and aesthetic pollutions;
  - e. Cost of living in the region would significantly rise due to the industrilisation.

Now does National prosperity still sound like a joke? Then,

1. Is all this strictly correct in the eyes of the law? Definitely not. The project is in direct defiance of the three basic legislations in the scheduled agency – a) the Land Transfer Regulations Act of 1959, b) the Forest Conservation Act of 1957 as amended by G.O. Ms. No. 264 I&C (M I) Dept. dt. 7.8.1991 and the fiasco of having a Pollution Control Board which gives clearance to selfish private interests under the garb of national prosperity.
2. Why suspect foul-play?  
Because the government has evoked the urgency clause of the Land Acquisition Act of hastily acquiring land for the project. If the project is really meant for national prosperity, then why
  - a) are the project details not available to the public?
  - b) Why should government acquire land on behalf of a private company?
  - c) In spite of all legal violations and bypassing of regulations, why has the government given clearance to the company?
3. What happened when people questioned national prosperity?  
At the Steel Plant, farmers who agitated for justice were beaten up and suppressed by the state;  
At Borra, tribals who went to court against mining, were taken into illegal custody \_ as naxalites;

- At Chintapalli, when tribals who migrated from Orissa, due to industrialization protested against eviction, they were repressed heavily by police action;
- In Chippada, when fishermen went to court against the Birlas, they were beaten up by the police and coerced to withdraw their case from the High Court.
- Away in the north, the andolands at Narmada and Jharkhand have met with the same governmental arrogance and ultimate injustice;
- Wherever social organizations protested they were labeled anti development;
- Thus in all the situations, where people voiced their questions – no response, no compensation, no justice, only harassment and repression and the trauma of displacement.

4. Is anybody else raising a voice?

5. Certainly the innocent tribal people of Anantagiri Mandal, the villagers of Tagerapuvalasa and Tatituru and the fisherfolk of Chippada, who are being told lies, and lies and unending lies of the prosperity that will be theirs tomorrow, are raising their voices to question why they are being given such a brutal prosperity.

6. why should you join the debate?

National prosperity is a bigger joke if all us of just accept it at face value. Do we not have the right to be told the facts and figures behind the projects that our governments plan for us? Don't you think we should join the debate in seeking answers for the kind of national prosperity that is desirable, sustainable and egalitarian?